



HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

**August 27, 2014 at 4:30 pm
Council Chambers**

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT

Gil Palmer, Chairperson
Trena Carter, Treasurer
Rhea Baker-Ipek
Kelly Benjamin
Greg Lewis
John Stroh
Richard Gold

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT

Ian Kohen, Vice Chairperson
Annette Barnes
Tony McClendon

STAFF PRESENT

Aida Ramirez, Director
Molly Connor, Deputy Director
Betsy Schuette, Secretary

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER

GUESTS PRESENT

Tim Shuffett, City Council Liaison

SECRETARY'S REPORT

Commissioner Lewis moved that the June minutes be approved. Commissioner Gold seconded. Motion carried. July minutes were approved.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Commissioner Carter reported the balance of the Donations Account as \$7019.24 with no activity since the last reporting period. The outstanding balance of ticket revenue is \$330.00 which would bring the final balance to \$7,349.24. The MACDA Video Grant had a beginning balance of \$25,000.00 with 2 payments being made to Cantaloupe LLC in the amount of \$5,000.00 each bringing the total balance to \$15,000.00.

CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

Chairperson Palmer extended a warm welcome to the new Deputy Director, Molly Connor. The Commissioners took turns introducing themselves to Deputy Director Connor.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

CASEWORK:

Director Ramirez reported the office is continuing to stay busy with case work. The following is the case activity that occurred:

Phone intake:

- Several contacts, both phone and in person with continued support prior to filing, sex harassment/hostile work environment (filed with EEOC)
- Disability, public accommodation, illiteracy in courts, provided resources
- Citizen complaint against City employees, provided resources redirected to Human Resources
- Disability in public accommodation, provided resources
- Age discrimination in employment, not actionable
- Disability discrimination in public school, provided resources redirected to Indiana Department of Education, BCSC complaint process

Scheduled in-person intake:

- Sex harassment and retaliation in employment, ongoing
- National origin in housing (alleging wrongful eviction), ongoing
- Hate crime incident involving bi-racial minors and family members, provided resources

Walk-in:

- Several contacts, public accommodation discrimination, scheduled for future intake

Technical assists:

- 2- Disability accommodation (alleging non-compliance of ADA by local area restaurants), ongoing technical assist

- Small Claims continuance, provided pre-printed materials

Other:

- Walk in, ongoing, homelessness/temporary housing assistance, possible mental illness due to harm to self, referral to Center Stone

COMMISSION:

- Director Ramirez reported that the Human Rights Commission had submitted to Mayor Brown a flat budget. The budget, unaltered, was submitted to City Council with the hearing being scheduled on August 7th. There was a tremendous show of support as Chairperson Palmer, Commissioner Kohen, and former Director Smith were also in attendance. The Council will consider the budget at the September 16th Council meeting and vote for approval at the October 7th meeting.
- Director Ramirez reported that after an extensive search and interview process, Molly Connor was hired as Deputy Director. Deputy Director Connor's first day with the Commission was on August 15th and we are delighted to have her join us.
- We received several applications for the open Commissioner position. All applications were submitted to City Council Liaison Shuffett for appointment by the Council and Mayor Brown.

OFFICE:

- Director Ramirez provided technical assistance to City Engineer, Beth Fizel, on the completion of a Local Public Agency (LPA) federal highway funding questionnaire.
- Director Ramirez provided technical support to East Chicago Human Rights Commission Director Consuelo Magana regarding the restructuring of their disability council.
- Director Ramirez attended the August meeting of CAMEO. The TrinBago Association was the host association for this meeting.
- Director Ramirez, along with other Department Directors, attended a "Thank You" reception at City Garage.
- Director Ramirez attended a brainstorming session and presentation on possible video ideas on August 18th, with the Cantaloupe TV, based in Indianapolis, and other various organization participants. The video will feature disability in employment success stories and feature area residents. The roll-out is tentatively scheduled for October 2014.
- Last month, Director Ramirez attended the Stone Belt Freedom Celebration with Mayor Brown. The City is in talks with Stone Belt to feature art created by program participants. Director Ramirez will have more information to come at the next meeting.
- Deputy Director Connor attended an HR webinar on August 19th provided by hr.blr.com.

OTHER ACTIVITIES-NETWORKING WITH THE COMMUNITY/EDUCATING THE COMMUNITY:

Bartholomew County Landlord's Association:

- Director Ramirez was the featured speaker at the August Bartholomew County Landlord's Association monthly meeting on August 9th. At the request of Association President Brad Grayson, Director Ramirez presented an overview of landlord-tenant law and updates to the law that were of particular importance to landlords and property managers. The event was a success and we anticipate enjoying a more collaborative relationship with this association.

Diversity Coalition of Columbus:

- Director Ramirez met with various community leaders and area stakeholders at the request of Mayor Brown. Director Ramirez will be the City Hall point of contact for this project. The project was convened by Mary Stroh, attorney at Sharpnack Bigley Stroh & Washburn LLP; Chad Phillips principal of Columbus Signature Academy- Lincoln campus; and Sondra Bolte former HR Director, Cummins, Global Ethics Investigations. The purpose of the project is to galvanize local area leaders to address a broad community issue. Jack Hess is training a larger group. Stroh, Phillips, and Bolte are charged with answering this challenge: "[t]o work together to increase the number of diverse individuals in meaningful positions of leadership." Director Ramirez and Deputy Director Connor attended the 2nd gathering of community stakeholders on August 26th at CSA-Lincoln. The

group will be adopting Principal Phillips' project to increase the number of ethnically diverse certified teachers within BCSC.

CITY HALL:

- Melissa Denney was hired as the City's new Multimedia Communications Resource.

UPCOMING:

- August 28: Deputy Director Connor will be interviewed by Megan Banta for *The Republic*.
- August 28: Director Ramirez will provide technical assistance to the Columbus Police Department to increase diversity in recruiting, hiring, and retention of officers.
- September 1-7: Columbus Ganesh Festival at The Commons
- September 2: Monthly Department Head meeting with Mayor Brown.
- September 4: Secretary Schuette will attend an Administrative Assistants training and seminar in Columbus at the Clarion.
- September 8: MACDA full committee meeting at 2:00pm in the Meeting Hall at City Hall.
- September 10: CAMEO meeting at 6:00pm at the Chamber of Commerce.
- September 22: MACDA side walk subcommittee meeting at City Hall.
- September 23: Diversity Coalition of Columbus meeting.
- September 24: HRC Executive Committee meeting, full Commission meeting

LIAISON REPORTS

- Commissioner Lewis reported he along with Chairperson Palmer and Director Ramirez attended the CAMEO meeting on 8/13/14 at the Chamber of Commerce. TrinBago Association hosted the meeting and served corn soup with lentil/split pea base and pholourie - ground split pea flour fried dumpling with tamarind sauce. The guest community presentation was from CMAD (Columbus Museum of Art and Design) which reported on the Heritage Fund Welcoming Community grant for Curator Training Program Encourage. CAMEO will decide whether to partner for the art exhibitions that would celebrate cultural heritage. Commissioner Lewis also reported the Columbus Got Talent program will focus on international talent. Also, the Indian Association's Ganesh celebration is September 1st—7th with public events at Commons September 6th—7th. *Ganesh* means "elephant head god".
- Commissioner Baker-Ipek- no report.
- Commissioner Stroh- no report.
- Commissioner Barnes- no report.

DISCUSSION

Commissioner Benjamin is on the Domestic Violence Action Team (DVAT) and reported that, along with Turning Point, they are holding the "Men Take a Stand" event. It will be on Wednesday, October 1st from 1:00-1:45 pm on the City Hall steps. If anyone would like to partake in a walk to the steps, meet at 5th and Washington at 12:45 p.m. to walk to the City Hall steps. There is also a luncheon at WellConnect with a national speaker sponsored by DVAT. That will occur from noon - 12:45 p.m. (just in time for the walk). Lunch is provided free of charge. If anyone is interested in going to the lunch, let Commissioner Benjamin know, as seating is limited. All are invited to the "Men Take a Stand" event (women and men). However, if a male is attending, please have him contact Commissioner Benjamin so his name will be called to take a stand on the steps.

ADJOURNMENT:

**Commissioner Stroh moved to adjourn, seconded by Commissioner Gold. Motion carried.
Meeting adjourned.**